



*charles* LADSON

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BLUE SPIRAL 1

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# charles LADSON

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"On the Paintings of Charles Ladson"

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COVER AND RIGHT: *Slice*, oil on canvas, 58.5"H x 58.5"W.





*Prey*, oil on canvas, 17"H x 17"W.

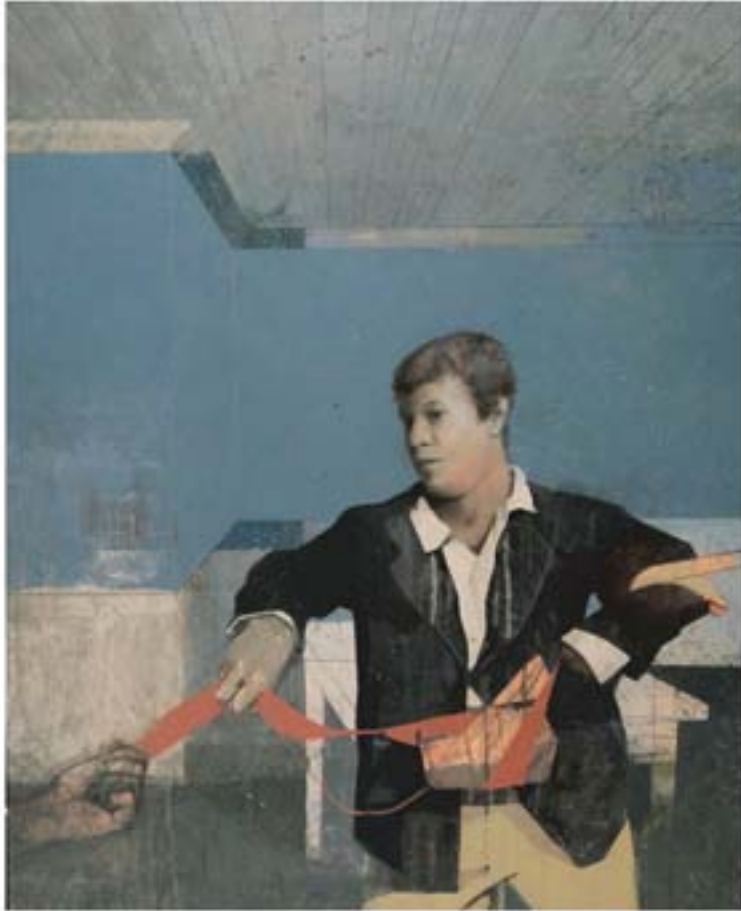
Charles Ladson begins work free from preconceived notions. Evocative paintings unfold serendipitously, as he layers imagery over past canvases. The result is a rich aesthetic that could not be achieved any other way. Despite their complexity, Ladson's paintings retain an effortless feel. Ladson deftly imbues his subjects with just the right amount of detail, preserving a loose and painterly appearance where much is left for the imagination of the viewer.

A diverse array of subjects ranging from figures to landscapes, beasts and interiors coalesce forming curious situations and conveying stories open to individual interpretation. Sections of characters reincarnate and apparently random objects appear in Ladson's work obscured and decontextualized. These aspects intensify an ambiguous narrative often instilling Ladson's canvases with dreamlike or psychological qualities.

Jordan Ahlers  
Gallery Director  
Blue Spiral 1



*Sucker*, oil on canvas, 21.25"H x 30"W.



*Clutch*, oil on canvas, 36"H x 29"W.





## On the Paintings of Charles Ladson

Charles Ladson's paintings, by intent, do not fit easily into traditional categories of art. Nor does the artist offer explanations for the works, instead challenging us to see, and to consider, the paintings on their own merits. His canvases present environments that incorporate the real and the surreal, the literal and the dream-like, some suggesting mythic, even Southern Gothic, themes. A sense of stillness, of silence, pervades many of these works, even those populated by his stolid people (including his often androgynous figures), suggesting the mood and tone associated with the paintings of the Symbolists and Surrealists of earlier eras.

Consider, for example, the environment and subjects depicted in works such as *Birthday* and *Vacuum*. In *Birthday*, a caryatid-like female figure stands, rooted, partially nude holding a cake and offering a Tiffany-like bag, surrounded by a kitchen dominated by a worn stove and cabinets covered with a patina of age and dirt. In *Vacuum*, a nude female torso, with head and limbs missing, is mounted like a mannequin, posed before a stained wall facing a mirror, with a Shaker-like chest and Electrolux vacuum on the floor nearby. Other works, equally quiet in nature, include one depicting a partially-filled glass bottle

LEFT: *Birthday*, oil on canvas, 42"H x 47"W.



*Leviathan*, oil on canvas, 26"H x 42"W.

surrounded by dirty tiles in a sink or tub enclosure. All are equally haunting, curious, and engaging, even when the subject matter is mundane.

In contrast, the work titled *Monitor* depicts an electronic monitor on a wooden floor, and behind it a strange, partial figure (a gremlin of some sort?) stands, pulling on the long cord that marks a central line across the painting's surface, suggesting that something disturbing (and perhaps loud) is about to happen. And in *Leviathan*, one of the most striking of his new works, a whale is hoisted upward alongside a ship in a sling, hanging against a calm sea and blue skies, as metal chains fill the foreground. Offering a rare explanation, this painting came to Ladson after a reading of Moby Dick.

Charles Ladson works in a studio in Macon, Georgia, the historic Southern city where he was born, in a community and environment that inspires him and his work. He grew up aware of art and art history, raised by a mother with an art history degree from Emory University in Atlanta, making family and school visits to the museum in Macon and the art galleries at Wesleyan College in Macon, as well as to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. He first studied art at the School of the Visual Arts in Savannah, then attended the School for the Visual Arts in New York, spending his senior year in Manhattan and its art world. After graduating, he spent time in Indianapolis before he enrolled in the MFA program at the



Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia, in Athens, studying with artists including Jim Herbert, Art Rosenbaum, Scott Belville, Radcliffe Bailey, and Jim Barsness.

When asked recently, he recalled that he was influenced in this period by his UGA professors and artists such as Gregory Gillespie, often featured in the galleries of the Georgia Museum of Art, as well as by the British artists, Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon. A contemporary art historian might find suggestions of the realist paintings of Andrew Wyeth and Georgia-born painter Bo Bartlett in Ladson's works, or echoes of American Surrealists and Magic Realist painters such as Jared French, George Tooker, Peter Blume, and Phillip Evergood, yet Ladson refers to none of these figures as influences. Today, he prefers to remove himself from the trends and currents of the contemporary art world, focusing on his own subjects and inspirations, working in the isolation of his Macon studio. The strong architectural sensibilities that mark these paintings may reflect the influence of Macon, and his work in renovating historic houses, giving him an intimate understanding and appreciation of salvaged materials and abandoned environments, contributing to the sense of patina, wear and mystery evident in many of his canvases.

J. Richard Gruber, Ph.D.

LEFT: *Monitor*, oil on canvas, 32"H x 36"W.

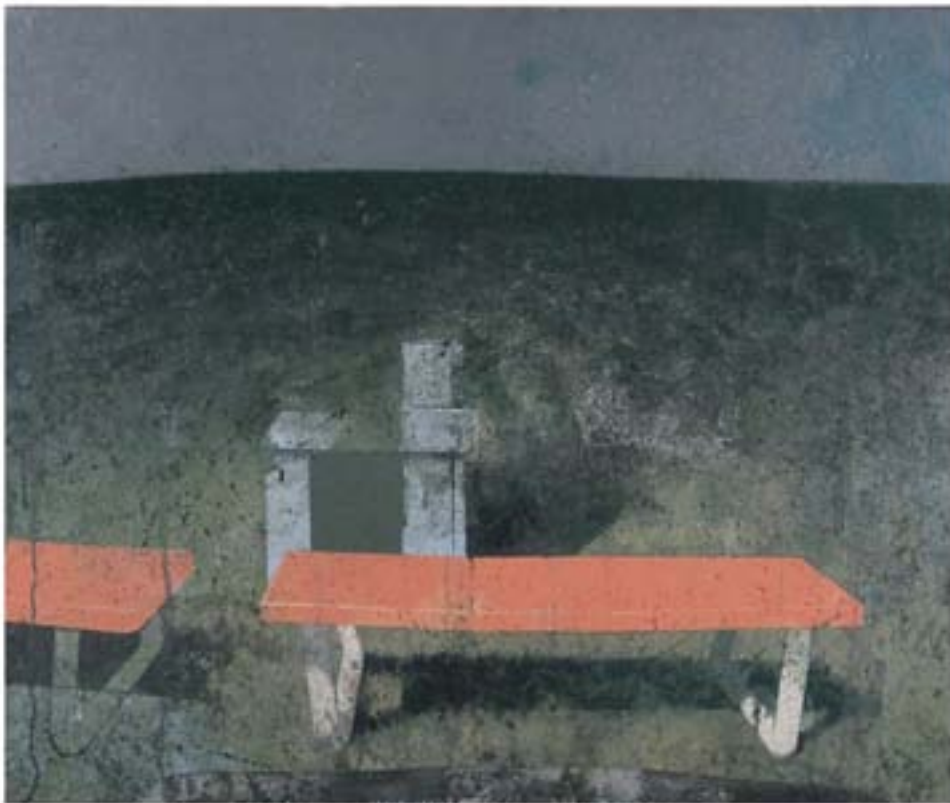


My finished work is a long collection of mostly bad ideas, movements, commitments, and random occurrences that have been saved (wholly or partially) or deleted all together. The paintings ramble along in all directions never knowing where they are going, and then they arrive. The content comes intuitively from this process and is more ambiguous than any deliberate attempt at commentary. People see what they want to see and everybody brings his own story to the table.

Charles Ladson

LEFT: *Outhouse*, oil on canvas, 68"H x 59.5"W.





*Bench*, oil on canvas, 30"H x 36"W.



*Fifth and Cherry*, oil on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.



*Vacuum*, oil on canvas, 24"H x 20"W.



*Bed*, oil on canvas, 53"H x 42.5"W.

## Exhibition Checklist

*1/2 Pint*, oil on canvas, 24"H x 28"W.

*Bed*, oil on canvas, 53"H x 42.5"W

*Bench*, oil on canvas, 30"H x 36"W.

*Birthday*, oil on canvas, 42"H x 47"W.

*Boris*, oil on canvas, 17.25"H x 29"W.

*Brink*, oil on canvas, 60"H x 68"W.

*Clutch*, oil on canvas, 36"H x 29"W.

*Contraption*, oil on canvas, 42"H x 53"W.

*Fifth & Cherry*, oil on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.

*Front*, oil on canvas, 14"H x 18"W.

*Krankenschwester*, oil on canvas, 50"H x 46"W.

*Leviathan*, oil on canvas, 26"H x 42"W.

*Monitor*, oil on canvas, 32"H x 36"W.

*Outhouse*, oil on canvas, 68"H x 59.5"W.

*Prey*, oil on canvas, 17"H x 17"W.

*Slice*, oil on canvas, 58.5"H x 58.5"W.

*Sucker*, oil on canvas, 21.25"H x 30"W.

*Vacuum*, oil on canvas, 24"H x 20"W.